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## CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Editor of the Virginia Law Register:*

I beg to call the attention of the profession, generally, and of Virginia's representatives in the National Divorce Congress, soon to assemble, especially, to a case recently coming under my observation that strikingly illustrates the utter inadequacy of our divorce laws. The case, which is one of peculiar hardship, is clearly stated in a communication, received by a lawyer of my acquaintance, of which the following is a true copy, the signature excepted:

Dear Sir:

"Being in an Isolated and Desolated condition, I beg leave to submit to your honour the following interview. I was born in Albemarle Co. Va. and reared in Augusta Co. Va. in which I married a woman conformable to the law of the said state. The same proved afterwards to be an ill match. In the meantime I, by continual study of the Holy word (or Scriptures) discovered that the ways of God were not the ways of men and being extremely desirous to follow the ways of God only, I made a vow to live apart from the ways of men.

"That I may not be tedious to you I will state to you what I desire. I have lived in your county above three years in a destitute and deplorable condition because of disagreeableness between the above-mentioned wife and myself. The principal causes of disagreement are these:

"1st. My objection to town or city life because of its dependence:

"2nd. She was non-affectionate.

"The reason that I cannot apply for divorce is that your divorce law is just diametrically opposite to the divorce law given in the Holy word, being a perversion of the same. The second reason is that she was clear of the offense, as defined by Webster and Worcester, only for which cause she may be clearly divorced by the New Testament Dispensation.

"My only defence is that there is no Scriptural law to prevent a man from taking to himself another wife while the first liveth and is not yet divorced. Only the Bishops and deacons are charged to be the husband of one wife, and then the word *only* doesn't appear.

"Under the 'fore mentioned vow I may not touch the law of men, therefore I want to ask you if there isn't a law in your hand by which I may be exempted from the law of the State (viz: free religious toleration) that I may perform the Lord's vow which I have taken which may never be broken. (Numbers 30:2).

"I am willing to compensate the granting of such priverleg with any available sum that you demand. I am sadly in need of a wife. Please consider that I have to earn the money by hard labour and at poor wages.

"Very Respectfully,

A—B—(colored)."

"P. S. I favour marriage without heresy."

To this plaintive appeal my friend could only reply that the heartlessness of our laws offered their victim little hope of relief from his desolate condition; that our heretical statute of religious toleration was not broad enough to fit his case; that the law against bigamy contemplated no exemption from the penalties imposed for its infraction; that he must submit, with philosophic resignation, to the galling yoke that too often goes with "the knot there's no untying," or hie him away to Utah, where a wife or two more or less was not a matter to excite the hostile notice of the authorities.

Now that reforms seem to be the order of the day, will not some enterprising member of the profession draft a bill, for discussion before the coming Divorce Congress, designed to give the relief for which the above recited case cries out? The writer will venture the prediction that not even Judge Phlegar—who has been selected to represent Virginia in that body—will be able to point out as many sound objections to the principle embodied in such a bill, as he has so ably urged against the Torrens Bill for Land Registration, which some of our reformers have proposed for passage by the next Legislature.

PAUL PETTIT.

Palmyra, Va.,

Dec. 12, 1905.